

My name is Dr. Neil Hampson. I am the Medical Director of the Center for Hyperbaric Medicine at Virginia Mason Medical Center in Seattle. We are the regional referral center for treatment of severe cases of carbon monoxide poisoning with hyperbaric oxygen in the hyperbaric chamber.

I am one of the top 3-4 experts in carbon monoxide poisoning in the country. I have published more than 50 papers on carbon monoxide poisoning in the medical literature and have spoken around the world on the topic.

I would like to congratulate the State of Washington for addressing this issue. Most unintentional CO poisoning is preventable and the place to start is with CO alarms. I advocated strongly for the legislation as it passed through the House and Senate and made recommendations for changes that were necessary.

Unfortunately, the SBCC Proposed Rules on CO alarms are changed from the law signed by the Governor and those changes are significant. The Proposed Rules have excluded all-electrical residences without attached garages, presumably because they do not have a permanent source of CO.

I am holding a recent article from the *American Journal of Public Health* that describes the carbon monoxide poisoning epidemic we experienced after the windstorm in December 2006 (1). An estimated 300-500 individuals were poisoned, 70 of them severely enough to warrant treatment in the Virginia Mason Hyperbaric Chamber. Of those 70 individuals, none were poisoned by fuel burning appliances in their residences or from vehicles running in attached garages. All were poisoned by improper use of gasoline-powered electrical generators or indoor use of charcoal briquettes. These could easily have occurred in the type of residences that would be excluded under the Proposed Rules.

I also operate a nationwide online reporting system for severe cases of CO poisoning, funded by the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). If one looks at unintentional poisonings that occurred in residential settings, 55% were due to fuel burning appliances such as furnaces and 45% were caused by CO sources brought into the home such as charcoal, generators, or pressure washers.

Since the Proposed Rules have the potential to miss approximately one-half of residential CO poisonings, I strongly encourage you to modify them to conform with the law passed by the Legislature, remove the exclusions for all-electric residences and those without garages, and make the requirements for CO alarms conform with those for smoke alarms. They should be present in all residences.

Reference

1. Gulati RK, Kwan-Gett T, Hampson NB, Baer A, Shusterman D, Shandro JR, Duchin JS. Carbon monoxide epidemic among immigrant populations: King County, Washington, 2006. *Am J Public Health*. 2009 Sep;99(9):1687-92